

Great Valley Flag Football Officiating Manual



Great Valley Flag Football Officiating Manual 2024

OFFICIATING

SECTION 1. GENERAL OFFICIATING

Article 1. Officials do not have to call everything they see but they must completely see everything they call.

Article 2. Game officials may not use any recording or replay in making any decision relating to the game.

Article 3. Officials must not tolerate taunting, baiting, and unsportsmanlike acts.

Article 4. Game official must err on the side of safety while officiating.

SECTION 2. ENDING THE GAME / FORFEITS

Article 1. The game may not end with a penalty unless it is declined.

Article 2. Penalties by the offense that include a loss of down with time expired in either half (i.e., there is no time on the clock) will not extend the half or game.

Article 3. Offsetting penalties will not extend the half or game.

Article 4. Forfeits that occur prior to game will be recorded as 28-0. Forfeits that occur during the game will be recorded at these scores or the actual score of the game at the time of the forfeit, whichever is the larger differential.

Article 5. A forfeit will not be official until expressly issued by a director only and deemed final.

Article 6. It is each team's responsibility to have enough players present at the coinflip in order to avoid a forfeit, even in the event of other divisions or fields running behind.

Article 7. No period or half can end if there is an obvious timing error or any other irregularity has occurred and verified.

Article 8. Four unsportsmanlike and / or personal fouls by one team will result in a forfeiture.

SECTION 3. PREVENTATIVE OFFICIATING

Article 1. Officials should aim to assist teams to avoid penalties (preventative officiating). Cautions and teaching points are appropriate most times.

Article 2. It is not the mission of the game officials to flag every small, nuanced infraction of traditional high-level football unless it produces a significant unfair advantage. Preventative officiating examples include:

- Warning players about unsportsmanlike conduct during the coin toss
- Reminding coaches and players how the clock works
- Clarifying rules
- Tell the quarterback to "wait for my whistle"
- Give players warnings when appropriate
- Remind players on the line to "check with me / look at me" to help them line up correctly
- Announcing "10 seconds to snap, please" and counting down: five, four, three, etc.
- Announcing "balls away" to let the defensive players know they can stop pursuing the passer
- Yelling 'forward' or 'back' while observing a pass to leave no doubt what you saw
- Keeping sidelines clear of players and coaches etc.

Article 3. Prior to a snap, officials can require and warn players to adjust their flags to their proper alignment. Repeated warnings of this nature can result in an unsportsmanlike penalty.

SECTION 4. MECHANICS OF OFFICIATING

Article 1. No penalty or penalty flag stops a live play.

Article 2. Be 'game-aware' of where you should be to make your best call.

Article 3. Officiating is a team sport. Keep regular eye-contact with fellow officials and mimic their commands and hand signals.

Article 4. Remember to 'dead ball' officiate. Just because the play is over doesn't mean you don't have to pay attention.

Article 5. Officials must highly endeavor to announce down and distance before any snap. While it always the team coach's responsibility to be game aware, the officiating crew should always endeavor to keep them informed.

Article 6. Resist the temptation to watch the ball in the air, no foul has ever occurred up there. Watch your players.

Article 7. Resist the temptation of running with the whistle in your mouth to avoid inadvertent whistles.

Article 8. Use short-underhand tosses to avoid hitting players with the ball when relaying the ball to a game official.

Article 9. Officials should throw their hat to the ground when they see a player step out-of-bounds.

Article 10. All officials will respect the calls of other officials. However, it is purely acceptable for an official to 'come over the top' of another official if the official had a better angle or saw something the other did not.

Article 11. In order to be convincing and 'sell' your calls: use strong whistle and flag mechanics, clear and crisp signals and a strong and clear voice.

Article 12. In the interest of safety do not attempt to throw your penalty flag to the exact spot of the foul when you may inadvertently hit a player with the thrown flag. Throw it somewhere parallel to the spot of the foul, but DO throw your flag to acknowledge a penalty occurred.

SECTION 5. MARKING THE SPOT

Article 1. The ball will be spotted wherever the ball was at the time of the flag pull or the ball carrier left the field-of-play.

Article 2. A ball spotter / ball marker or line judge shall be used to mark the line-of-scrimmage.

Article 3. When a ball carrier's flag accidentally falls off — but not as a result of any action by the defense — that player will be downed by one-hand touch.

Article 4. Flag guarding is notionally and effectively the end of the play. However, the play will be allowed to come to its natural dead-ball situation without the whistle being blown.

Article 5. If a defensive player initiates contact with a ball carrier while making an attempt to capture the ball carrier's flag and that force causes the ball carrier backward prior to the flag being captured 'forward progress' will be awarded as long as the ball carrier does not make a move under their own power to continue the play.

Article 6. If the ball is intercepted in the end zone and intercepting team fouls in the end zone prior to the ball being brought back into the field (example: flag guarding) the result of the play will be a touchback and the foul will be administered from the touchback spot. This will not result in a safety.

Article 7. If the entire ball is brought back into the field of play and then a foul occurs anywhere on the field, including the end zones, the penalty will be administered from the spot of the foul.

SECTION 6. PENALTY ENFORCEMENT

Article 1. Penalties are assessed for live ball fouls in the order they occurred before dealing with dead ball fouls.

Article 2. Live ball and dead ball fouls do not offset one another.

Article 3. Officials may accept or decline penalties on a coaches behalf if they are obvious. However, the coach has the last word.

Article 4. There is no limit of how many dead ball fouls can be enforced.

Article 5. Penalties will be assessed half the distance to the goal when the yardage is more than half the distance to the goal.

Article 6. Fouls simultaneous to the snap, if accepted, will result in penalty yardage assessed and the down replayed.

Article 7. An official shall have the authority to rectify an error and correct a down until the series has ended.

Article 8. Penalties associated with automatic first downs: An offended team may accept the automatic first down portion of a penalty but decline the yardage portion or they may accept both the yardage and the automatic first down.

Article 9. Yardage portions of any penalty may be declined.

Article 10. Disqualifications, Ejections and Unsportsmanlike Conduct are the only three penalties that cannot be declined.

Article 11. The loss-of-down aspect of a penalty has no significance following a change of possession or if the line to gain is reached after the enforcement.

Article 12. If an Opponent of the scoring team commits a foul (other than unsportsmanlike conduct or nonplayer foul) during a down in which a touchdown is scored and there was no change in possession, offense may accept the result AND choose enforcement on PAT or Next Possession.

NFHS 2023 rulebook: Page 69 for reference

SECTION 7. ESTABLISHING ZONE-LINE-TO-GAIN

Article 1. For live ball fouls, the penalty yardage will be marked off first, then the next line-to-gain (first-down marker) will be established.

Article 2. On a change of possession, all live-ball penalties will be administered prior to determining the next line-to-gain. Once that line is established all dead ball penalties will be administered.

Article 3. To determine if a first down was achieved on any given running or passing play, the official will mark off any un-administered live-ball penalty yards before making the determination.

Article 4. If a penalty awards an automatic first down (e.g., roughing the passer) and the original line-to-gain was not achieved after the yardage was resolved, the original line-to-gain will remain in effect.

SECTION 8. PACE OF PLAY

Article 1. Officials will hustle but not hurry. They must control the game and not let an anxious team set the pace. Please keep a consistent and brisk pace throughout the game to ensure teams get the maximum amount of playing time possible.

Article 2. If a snap occurs before the officials are ready, ready-to-play whistle or announcement, the ball will be blown dead and the quarterback issued a warning for the first offense. For the second offense a Delay-of-Game penalty will be earned.

Article 3. Officials may stop the clock as they see fit in order to administer a fair, controlled contest.

Article 4. Offensive teams may not take advantage of defensive substitutions to run "quick snap" plays to catch defensive teams not ready. Offense does not have to wait for defense if officials are set and ready to play has occurred.

SECTION 9. MOMENTUM RULE

Article 1. If the ball is intercepted between the 5-yard line and the goal line and the player's momentum takes them into the End Zone where the ball becomes dead in their possession or the intercepting team fouls in the end zone (example: flag guarding) the ball belongs to the intercepting

team and the penalty will be assessed from the spot where it was intercepted. It is not a touchback. It is not a safety.

SECTION 10. CONTACT ABOVE THE SHOULDERS

Article 1. Safe play is our utmost concern. Officials will penalize any noteworthy contact above the shoulders (head, neck, or face) between players, even if accidental.

SECTION 11. HOLDING

Article 1. Holding is a judgement call. Officials will penalize any noteworthy hold that provides a significant unfair advantage. A simple tug or momentary grasp may not necessarily constitute holding. Holding is an attempt to gain a physical advantage by using hands or arms to hook, lock, clamp, grasp, encircle or restraining an opponent. Be aware defenders will be given the benefit of the doubt if the ball carrier's shirt is untucked.

SECTION 12. ILLEGAL PERSONAL CONTACT

Article 1. No player may make contact with an opponent that is judged to be unnecessary or provokes rough-play or retaliation.

Article 2. In the judgement of the game official, when one player uses enough force to knock another to the ground by pulling, tripping, bear-hugging, charging, sweeping, flinging, shoving, 'bodying-up' etc. Whether or not the player goes to the ground is irrelevant.

Article 3. It is possible for a player(s) to go to the ground and it not be considered Illegal Contact, such as unintentional collision, i.e., the runner and defender meeting in the same space during the play, when a defender is making a fair, safe and reasonable attempt to capture the ball carriers flag and the ball carrier is making a fair, safe and reasonable attempt to avoid the defender. Simply stated, two solid objects tried to occupy the same space at the same time.

Article 4. If a defender trips or compresses a ball carrier while pursuing the offensive player from the rear (typically seen in break-away plays), even if the defender is making a fair and reasonable attempt to capture the ball carrier's flag, the defender will be called for Illegal Contact. The defender is obliged to make a fair, SAFE and reasonable attempt.

Article 5. Safety is paramount.

Article 6. Incidental contact between opponents that does not grant either player an advantage should not be penalized.

SECTION 13. COOL DOWN PERIOD

Article 1. Before, or instead of, disqualification or ejection an official may order (but is not required to) a player a "cool down" period if the official chooses.

Article 2. Players should think of this 'cool down' as a warning before being ejected and be thankful for it.

Article 3. This period will consist of five plays and will be tracked by the official that ordered the 'cool down'.

Article 4. The player must be off the field for five plays regardless. A score or other event does not release the player back to the field. They must stay off the field for five plays.

SECTION 14. DISQUALIFICATIONS AND EJECTIONS

Article 1. Disqualifications, Ejections and Unsportsmanlike Conduct are the only three penalties that cannot be declined. They are completely the option of the game officials. The yardage portion of the penalty may be declined but infraction itself cannot.

Article 2. The difference between disqualification and ejection is completely the determination of the presiding referee and may not be appealed.

Article 3. Disqualifications are normally reserved to address lower-level transgressions.

Article 4. A disqualification will last for the remainder of the contest the player was disqualified for.

Article 5. A disqualified player may play in the next scheduled contest.

Article 6. An ejected player may not play in the next scheduled contest. They must sit out at least one additional game.

Article 7. Any official may disqualify a player.

Article 8. To eject a player all officials must agree and it must be reported to the League Director prior to play resuming.

Article 9. Ejections / disqualifications may occur for but are not limited to:

- A second unsportsmanlike or personal foul on a single player
- Any act deemed egregious by the head official
- Disrespectfully addressing or intentionally touching a game official
- Four unsportsmanlike and /or personal fouls by one team (forfeiture)
- Fighting of any kind, with punches thrown or landed, or involving yourself with a fight in order to escalate the situation without control.

SECTION 15. UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT

Article 1. Disrespect toward an official, coach, spectator or another player will constitute unsportsmanlike conduct.

Article 2. Players shall not 'showboat', taunt, spike the ball or flag belt toward an opponent, or be excessive in any way, to include using force against or verbally attack or harass another player.

Article 3. Celebrations are fine but keep them short, conservative and not directed at an opponent.

Article 4. Use of inflammatory words or gestures is prohibited.

Article 5. If unsportsmanlike conduct occurs during a live play and the team did not score on that play, the penalty will be assessed from the new line-of-scrimmage, i.e., will be added to or subtracted from the end of the play.

SECTION 16. FIGHTING

Article 1. Fighting will lead to immediate ejection, possible suspension or lifetime exclusion.

Article 2. Fighting is any act or attempt to act by a player or non-player to strike or engage a player or non-player in a combative manner unrelated to football. Such acts include, but are not limited to, attempting to or striking with the arms, hands, legs, feet, or foreign object whether or not there was contact.

Article 3. Any player who comes off the sideline to participate in a fight will be disqualified or ejected.

Article 4. If either team leaves the bench during a fight the game will be forfeited immediately.

SECTION 17. BENCH FOULS / WARNINGS

Article 1. Teams may incur bench fouls for a variety of reasons to include but not limited to:

- Players or non-players interfering with play or an official
- Disrespect toward officials or other players or non-players
- Players or non-players in the designated restricted zone during a live play
- Non-players on the field of play
- Teams not remaining in the designated team box
- Coaches on the field or becoming entangled in a live play

SECTION 18. INADVERTENT WHISTLE

Article 1. If an official blows an inadvertent whistle they will declare the ball dead where the ball was at the time the inadvertent whistle. The team against which the action offended may have the option of accepting the play (i.e., the yards gained and the down advances) or replaying the down from the original line-of-scrimmage.

Article 2. If the ball was in the air when the inadvertent whistle occurred it will be returned to the line-of-scrimmage and the down will be replayed.

Article 3. If a penalty marker is thrown prior to an inadvertent whistle, an accepted penalty will be administered as in any other play situation. When the foul is accepted, the inadvertent whistle is disregarded.

Article 4. When an inadvertent whistle is triggered by an unfair act or an act used to deceive or confuse a game official the officiating crew may use their collective judgement to fairly adjudicate the situation. It may result in yardage awarded, a score granted, and/or the guilty player disqualified, etc. It is solely up to the officiating crew to decide.

SECTION 19. UNFAIR ACTS RULE

Article 1. Neither team shall commit act(s) which, in the judgment of the game officials, tends to make a travesty of the game.

Article 2. The head official may enforce any penalty or remedy any situation with anything he/she considers equitable — including the award of a first down, a line-zone-to-gain, a replay, a score with the approval of an official tournament director.

Article 3. If an ineligible player (ex: not on the roster, previously disqualified or previously ejected) is discovered by any means (ex: observation, challenge, etc.) participating in a live ball play that team will forfeit the game and the Unfair Act is assessed to the head coach.

SECTION 20. LAST PLAYER RULE AND PENALTY

Article 1. If the last defensive player physically contains the ball carrier (e.g., bear hugs, flagrantly holds, pushes the ball carrier out-of-bounds above the hip, tackles, attempts to tackle, etc.) without making a clear, legal attempt to pull the ball carrier's flag or commits illegal contact, the offensive team will be awarded at least one line-zone-to-gain distance from the spot of foul and an automatic first down.

Article 2. In the spirit of the Unfair Acts Rule: Officials have the discretion to award a score if a flagrant foul occurred inside the final line-zone-to-gain or they reasonably believe a foul is the only thing that prevented the ball carrier from scoring. To evoke this rule we require there must be total agreement of all game officials that saw the foul. (IAW Rule 9-9-5 NFHS).

SECTION 21. SCRIMMAGE PLAY POSITIONING

